

CALENDAR

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Kidney Punches in Washington Arena

BY PERRY BRUCE GRIFFITH

TO MOVE A NATION by Roger Hilsman (Doubleday and Co.: \$6.95):

• This book took a lot of guts to write—the way it's written. Here is raw, top echelon, kidney punching politics — the way it works—in Washington and in other world capitals.

This isn't Boss Vare politics—a load of coal dumped in an empty bin for a favor. This is the Big Apple.

The book covers the Kennedy years. If anything, Hilsman, who was pretty much in the inner-club, has let his worship of J.F.K. and his family, personal and official, go off the rails.

He takes on a fair share of the people who run this country. For example, while generally going easy on Dean Rusk, he still keeps him on the hook from cover to cover. McNamara, admired for his highly documented and organized way of doing things, is pictured as doing too many things that should be done by those in uniform, and yet, with sort of sympathetic compassion. John McCone, called "an Irish Catholic Republican... an alley fighter who

will stop at nothing" by one of Hilsman's columnist friends, comes through as a man of high moral purpose and principle but completely ambitious. This is not the feather pillow league.

The book is extremely well written, with military and legal case history format (Hilsman is a West Pointer who left

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uniform to go into the State Department after World War II. He is a professor at Columbia). But it is the sheer dynamism of men coping with the sometimes almost impossible burdens thrust upon them that gets through in the writing.

The book drags only where the writer attempts to build a historical framework of how we got into Southeast Asia in the first place. And if the reader can manage to organize jaw-breaking polysyllabic proper names and places, he can get through this.

Some of the quotes are

classics: "Members of a cabinet are the President's natural enemies," Vice President Dawes, President Kennedy's favorite quotation from Dante was, "The hottest corner of hell is reserved for neutrals in time of moral crisis." "Nothing does more harm in a state than that cunning men pass for wise." In the showdown on the Cuban crisis, Khrushchev had told the Russian people, "there was a smell of burning in the air," and that the West might be a paper tiger but it had nuclear teeth, a phrase that caused Kennedy to twit Schlesinger about how good his rival speech writers were in the Kremlin.

Having been involved in some of the crises described; the Congo, India and Pakistan, this all serves to recall how things always seem to get themselves sorted out even though very bleak.

One of the gems of character description running through the book is Hilsman's continual referral to Averell Harriman and his effort-

less, yet effective, way of handling things, regardless of whether in Tibet or the Kremlin.

This all reminded me of the first time I had lunch with Ambassador Harriman in the secretary of state's dining room. There were possibly 10 or 12 of us present, and my counterpart in State remarked, "Keep your eye on the governor. If he gets bored or the conversation flags, he'll just turn the volume down on his hearing aid. He won't be asleep."

This book is replete with current history, profile and anecdote. This is the way things work: by committee, luncheon, at a cocktail party. It's a lot different than how most of us think it is.

President Truman, when contemplating turning the White House over to Gen. Eisenhower, said, "He'll sit there and he'll say, Do this! Do that! And nothing will happen. Poor Ike — it won't be a bit like the army."

Which he jolly well soon found out, I should suspect.

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a Nation